IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 1, line 5, with the following paragraph:

The present invention may relate to co-pending application Serial No. 09/534,108, filed March 23, 2000, now U.S. Patent No. 6,886,126, issued April 26, 2005, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 10, line 3, with the following paragraph:

The present invention may be used to propagate a signal indicating the detection of a transmission exception (e.g., a synchronization failure in a source data stream) to a remote location across the encoded serial data stream 206 using a block-coded character 210. For example, one or more characters of the encoded serial data stream 206 may be replaced with a predetermined character. The predetermined character may be orthogonal to (e.g., outside of) an encoded data and special character set. The character used may be, in one example, an invalid character that is outside the set of all valid data and valid special characters (e.g., the C0.7 character as identified in the CY7B923/CY7B933 datasheet, Cypress Semiconductor Corp., April 5, 1999, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety). However, other characters may be used to meet the design criteria of a particular

implementation. The propagated signal generally does not interfere with the normal operation of the protocol. The present invention may be used in applications requiring a high-integrity data environment (e.g., banking and other financial transaction or calculation based systems). The present invention may be limited to use in interfaces where the data is not temporal in nature (e.g., video) and minor data imperfections can be recovered through use of retry or retransmission of the data.